

Today and Tomorrow . . . By Walter Lippmann

A Sad Anniversary

IT IS DEPRESSING enough to be reminded today of the high hopes of 1945 when the U.N. was founded.

It is even more depressing to listen to the self-righteousness of the great powers, to hear their representatives talking as if they alone were innocent and that the whole blame for the failure should



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be put upon their rivals and adversaries. Nothing discloses so sharply the root of the trouble as does this display of self-righteous nationalism.

The U.N. cannot be blamed for the disorder which the great powers have failed to prevent, which indeed the great powers by their unilateral actions have provoked. What happened twenty years ago was like a big wedding celebration in which solemn vows were exchanged and everyone felt that the bride and the groom would live happily ever after. Now, twenty years later, while they have not murdered each other or even been divorced, they are not living happily together. Is that the fault of the institution of marriage, or is it the fault of the man and the fault of the woman?

So it is with the institution of the U.N. which is a covenant of the nations that they will turn over a new leaf and behave better than they are accustomed to behave. The old Adam has prevailed. They have not turned over a new leaf in Budapest and Suez, in Korea and Kashmir, in Viet-Nam and Santo Domingo. In such places as these the world order has been shaken, as U Thant put it in his noble address last Saturday, by "power politics, whether as the instrument of nationalism or of ideological extremism."

THE SPECIFIC failure of the U.N. has been in those conflicts where the great powers, particularly the great nuclear powers, have opposed each other. This would not have surprised the authors of the Charter, particularly those among them who have learned the lessons of the old League of Nations. They did not want to burden the new organization with the making of the peace and they wrote into the Charter (Article 106) the

reservation that problems arising from the Second World War were outside the jurisdiction of the U.N., and were reserved for the four allied victors.

The reason why the U.N. has not been able to keep the peace everywhere is that the four allied victors never made a peace for the U.N. to keep. In Europe the victors have quarrelled over the nature of a German peace settlement. In Asia they have been unable to come within sight of a settlement that included China, and the borderland of China is strewn from Korea to Pakistan with the unsettled and explosive remnants of the old empires of Japan, Britain, the Netherlands, and France.

THERE HAS BEEN until recently significant progress in building the foundations of a settled order in Europe. During the last year of Kennedy's life there began a "precarious detente," as U Thant said, "between East and West." This detente is threatened by the war in Viet-Nam and the threat of a still larger and

more savage war in which the belligerents are no longer able to measure and limit their violence.

The U.N. has a powerful interest in bringing the Vietnamese war to an end. But it cannot act decisively. For the issue of that war lies between China, which is excluded from the U.N., and the United States, which has worked indefatigably and successfully to exclude China. The paramount task of the U.N. is to survive the conflict which it could not prevent and cannot settle. Somehow and in some way, which none of us can now foresee, the Vietnamese war will stop short of its becoming the third World War.

And when that happens, the U.N. will be needed to bind up the wounds of the nations.

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